SFLY051114-347

welcome to our
family book

a little bit about us

Hi, We're Alan and JJ, and welcome to our big ol' life together condensed down into one tiny book. We're excited that you want to learn more about us. We hope to give you a glimpse into our story, and the people and places that help make it happen.

we met at a backyard bbq

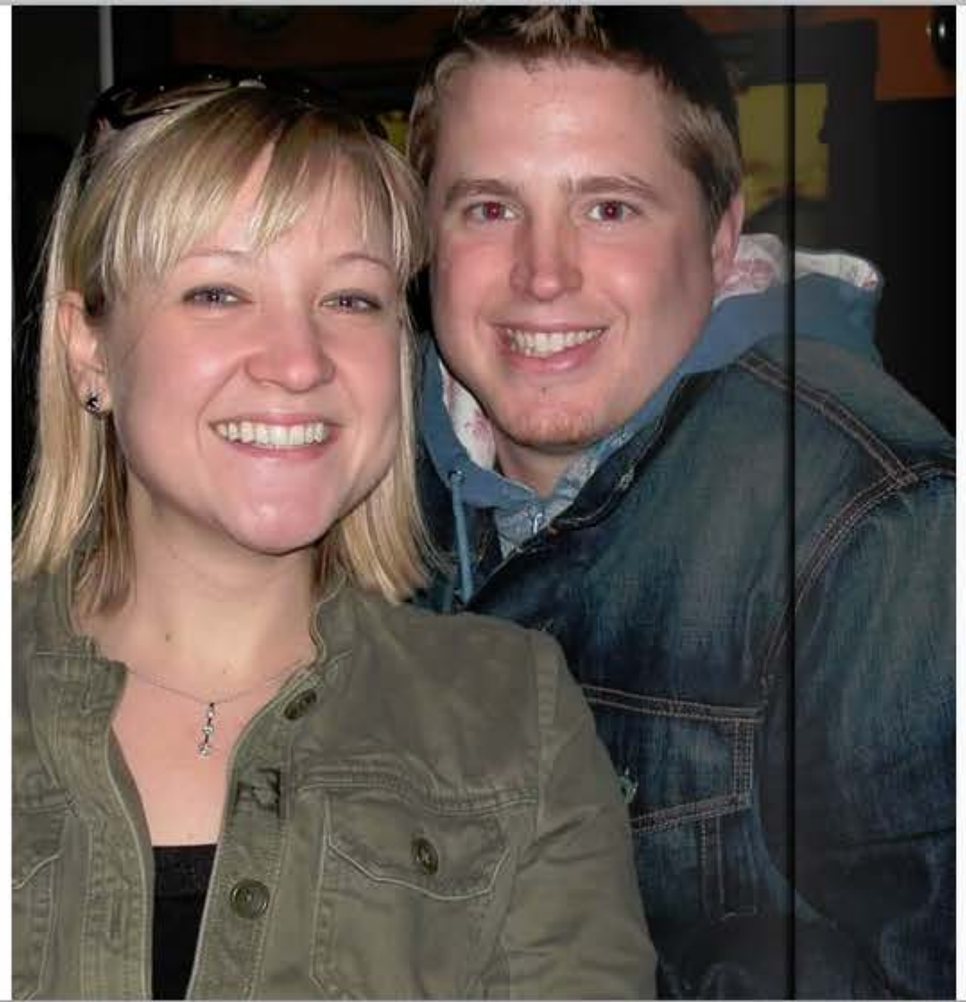
We got married eight months after we met but it all started 16 years ago when we couldn't stop talking at a summer cookout in Memphis, TN. And, as cliche as it sounds, we just knew.

Our "legal" first wedding was in the backyard of a preacher we barely knew, being cheered on by the neighbors. Four days later, we tied the knot again in Costa Rica - this time in a private ceremony in the jungle, just the two of us. Our first adventure set the tone for our life together.

After getting married, we packed up our old station wagon and moved from Tennessee to the Pacific Northwest. We had a small amount of money and an even smaller place to live but always did what we needed to make it work. Those times were tough but made us a better team, and close best friends.

We found work in the PNW, and those jobs have turned into careers that we're happy to have. We both work in the creative field and love what we do. Sometimes, we even get to work together.

Our life is an awesome love-filled adventure. And, when we're not working hard, we're playing hard, pursuing things we love like music, art, camping, and of course, traveling. Oh, and we have two pups named Memphis and Lil B - our scrappy cuddle buddies.



N2

Augustijn
Kastaar

about alan

The first thing you should know about me is that I love to make people laugh. And JJ and I have been laughing and living in the Pacific Northwest for 15 years, but I'm originally Tennessee. Growing up in a small rural town gave me a love for animals, nature, and simple living that I still carry with me today. I love the outdoors and sports, and we fill our summers with hiking, camping, and road tripping, and our falls with college sports and traveling.

Since moving to the Pacific Northwest, we've become a bit more city-fied, but that's exposed us to even more cultures and experiences. We love exploring new places. Being able to discover perspectives outside of my everyday life is vital to me. Every new place I go, or person I meet is an opportunity to grow.

I sang in an R&B a cappella group, in the 90s.

I run my own Brand Strategy Marketing Consulting business.

I'm awful at foosball, JJ is great.

I listen to music, especially hip-hop, about 90% of the day.

I love the desert, but not the biggest fan of dessert.

I was born on November 2nd in the small town of Milan, TN. Around the age of three, my sister Carey showed up which was news to me. Our childhood and family upbringing provided us with so many opportunities as our entire family lived in Milan, and Mom and Dad were very engaged and active in all parts of our lives. We were always playing sports, singing in church choir, working at Aunt Jackie's florist, taking hunters safety courses, going fishing, with them coaching the teams, running the leagues, actively participating. Carey and I were, and still are, a tight unit.

I spent most of my time as a kid exploring nature and being outside. Even when video games and computers came along, I typically chose to go fishing with my Grandad Jack, learn about the native tribes of TN on backwood hikes with Grandaddy Fred, or shell purple-hull peas with my grandmother. Summers were epic, and when I wasn't in the woods or on a lake, I played about every sport you can think of and stayed out past dark on long biking adventures with the neighborhood kids.

I was never into just one thing as a kid, and that's likely because I had so many different people in my life. I liked duck hunting and fishing just as much as singing in the choir and learning hip-hop dance moves. I was into Atari video games while being obsessed with Bigfoot - the monster truck not the Sasquatch. And, as I grew up that idea of mixing it up and doing new things in life has stuck with me. I don't feel that anyone or anything should be put in a box and expected to act or live a certain way.

I've changed directions several times in my life and always feel that it has been for the best. I started college as a Pre-Med student before switching gears to get a microbiology & environmental science degree. That degree quickly turned into me working for my aunt's sports medicine clinic as the director of marketing which ended up being my cup of tea, until I met JJ.

Falling for JJ sparked my creative side as she was so inspiring and artistic. I remember thinking how much fun I was having while helping her set up a gallery show - and feeling hopeful for things to come. Over the years, I absorbed some of her mojo and found some of my own. We decided to team up and start our design and marketing agency which we ran for about five years before deciding it was nicer to be married and friends versus talking shop all day. We still work together, but only on special occasions.

I have an antsy passion for life, meaning I can't wait to get out and get going. The world is big and diverse, and I want to be a part of it. People and nature are my religion. I'm into being graceful and being a better human and treating people like you'd want to be treated. Be empathetic. Forgive. Love. I feel a spiritual connection with nature -- and hold that we and all living things share a connectedness.

I'm nuts about my wife and best friend, JJ. She keeps me inspired, balanced, loved and supported. We work well together. We have amazing friends and family that we cherish, along with our dogs, Memphis and Lil B.

I've always had this lingering notion that I would adopt someday, but I never really listened to it. It always felt like I was destined to play a more significant role in someone's life not directly connected to me and my experiences. Now is that moment, and this feels like the exact place we're supposed to be.

I'm excited to foster a fun-loving, inclusive environment and future for our child and extended family. I hope to build a village of loving and diverse mentors for a child, and open the door to unique viewpoints and experiences along the way.

about jj

I am a designer, and one of my favorite things to do is create beautiful experiences. Whether it is a project for work or setting the dinner table, I strive to make everything I do come from a place of creative expression. I try to notice the details that other people miss because I think that is where you find the beauty in the everyday ordinary.

I try to treat every day as a special occasion because with Alan, it really is. Something as simple as going for a walk around the neighborhood can result in a delightful and unexpected occurrence. I look forward to those small, magical moments and happy accidents.

After telling my mom that we were going to adopt, she said to my sister, "Did you hear about Alan and JJ's exciting news?" to which my sister replied, "They always have exciting news... " I loved hearing that because it is how I try to live my life.

I am so excited for us to be parents so we can share this same experience with our child and extended family.

I lived in Germany for a short period of time.

I was a line dancing waitress.

I am a huge West Virginia University football fan.

I sew words on paper.

I am great at foosball, Alan is awful.

My favorite song is a tie between Wish You Were Here by Pink Floyd and Passin' Me By by the Pharcyde.

I am from a small town in West Virginia where I spent most of my days surrounded by friends and family in a little lake community.

Growing up, my family always had a lot of fun together. My mom would always make everything so special. She tried so hard to make life good for us. My dad is a great listener, a storyteller, and a friend. He would draw cartoons of us and make us laugh. Both of my parents are funny and creative people.

I graduated with a degree in Advertising/Journalism from West Virginia University. After graduating, I worked at a newspaper as a graphic designer for a year before deciding to apply to graduate programs.

I was accepted to Memphis College of Arts Masters Program for Digital Art and moved to Memphis where I eventually met Alan. I like to say that my life started when I moved there.

We dated for eight months before getting married. After I graduated, we moved to the PNW to start our life together.

I have worked as a Graphic Designer, Design Director, Creative Director and now I manage the User Experience Design team for a computer technology company. Alan and I also own an agency on the side.

Of course, I love anything design. I try to apply it to every aspect of my life. My home, my style, my artwork. I love researching it and seeing what other designers are doing as well as creating work myself.

Alan and I love to travel. We feel that it helps us understand the world a little better and makes us better global citizens. I also used to travel a lot for my job. I've been to Mexico, Canada, Costa Rica, The Netherlands, Belgium, France, England, Germany, Thailand, Japan, China, and all over the United States.

I love to be outdoors. Whether it is hiking, camping, running around the golf course, working in the yard, or just sitting on my front porch, outside is where I am my happiest.

I also love to cook. Alan and I carefully plan out or meals every Sunday. We put on music and talk about our days and enjoy cooking together. One of my favorite things to do is to set the table and sit down and eat the meal that we made together.

My greatest satisfaction would have to be my relationships. I work very hard to nurture the relationships that are important to me, and because of that, I feel that for the most part, nothing but love surrounds me.

I have many dreams of being a mother. I want to have the house where my kid and their friends want to spend their time. I want to create a fun and nurturing environment where my child is so comfortable and feels so at home that they want to be there with me and their father as a family. I want a house full of laughter, pets, baking, arts and crafts, movie watching nights, and the list goes on.

I want to be the kind of parent who listens and who teaches while making life fun. I want to instill in my child to not take life too seriously and to know that there is always a break in traffic if they learn to be patient. I want my kid to see that they are surrounded by love with a large open extended family who are all working together to give them the best life.

ADIO

Jum Schlüssel

our home and neighborhood

We bought our home in 2005. It is a diverse, family-friendly neighborhood recognized by one big hill surrounded by parks, green spaces and community schools. The house is a two bedroom bungalow that we've put a lot of love and care into over the past 13 years. The house was painted black a few years ago which is surprisingly cool year-round, and it helps us create a spooky haunted house vibe when we decorate for Halloween. The neighborhood kids love it. Most recently, we added a new kitchen and are so excited to cook family dinners and bake cookies as a family. We have a big backyard with a little art/work studio that we use for cookouts, playing bag toss with friends and family, and watching football games.

We love our neighborhood. We have dog parks and playgrounds in all directions, and can easily walk down to the school to shoot hoops and swing on monkey bars. We're excited as our neighborhood school is a community school that offers opportunities that support healthy child and youth development and family stability. There's also a family-friendly food cart pod and a library within walking distance. Our neighbors are diverse and know us well. We've created great relationships with them and their families over the years. We share food, watch out for each other, and meet up in the neighborhood for community events and holidays.

BAERLIC
BREWING
CO

holidays & traditions

Holidays are a big deal for us, and we go all out like a couple of kids. Halloweener tops the charts, followed closely by Christmas and the holiday season.

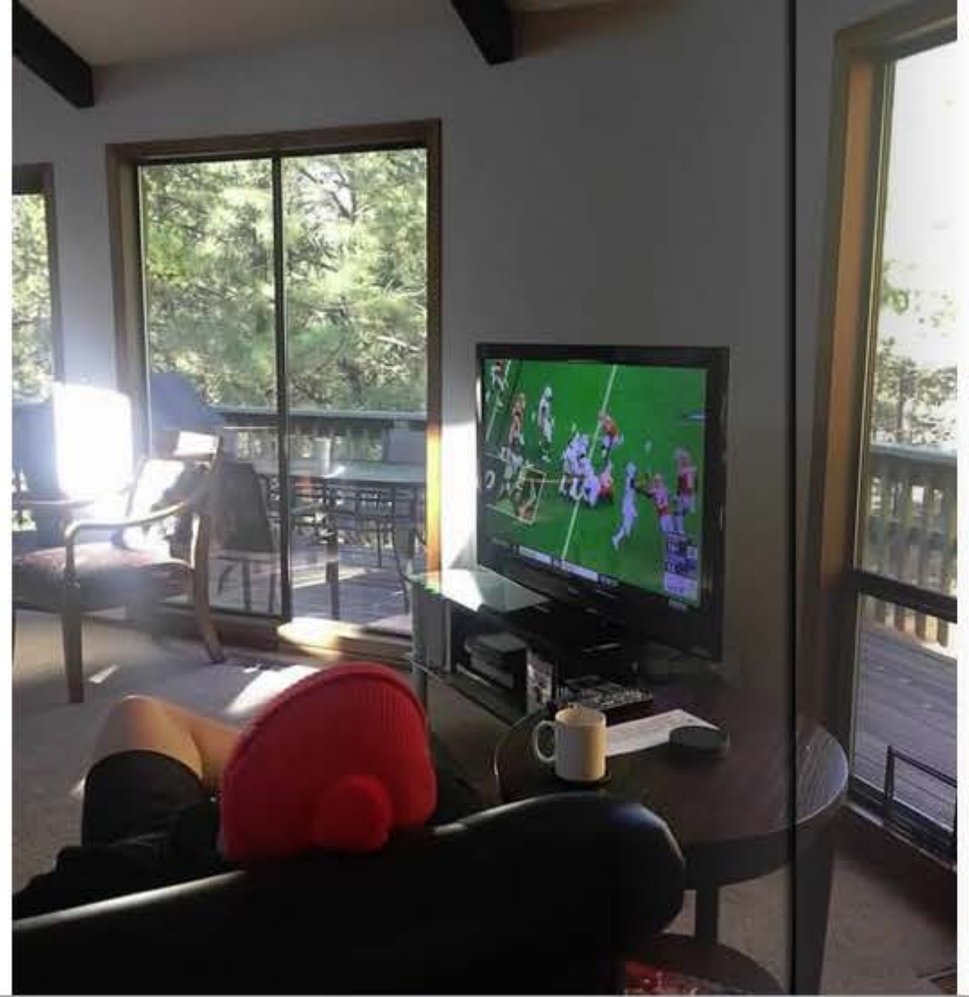
Halloween for us is all about fun and honoring our ancestors. Every year, we take a day to go to a pumpkin patch to pick out the perfect gourd for our annual carving party with friends. And, we love to decorate our home and give out candy to the neighborhood kids. JJ is the queen of Halloween decorating, and Alan carves a mean melon.

We host Thanksgiving every year for all of our friends who cannot be with their families. Everyone brings their favorite dishes from their childhood, and we chow down on entirely too much food until we can't see straight. We give thanks for those close to us and reflect on the history of the holiday and its impact on native cultures.

The holiday season for us starts after Thanksgiving. With the Halloween decorations still warm in their boxes, JJ pulls out the Christmas crates to give the house a fresh coat of sparkle. We decorate, make cookies, and try to find the perfect tree from a local farm or nearby lot. Most years we stay in the PNW, but often we'll travel to Tennessee or West Virginia to celebrate with our families. When we don't go home, we roll out the red carpet with the Robinson-Richards Christmas, a joint family celebration with our close friend Daisy and anyone else who wants to join. We watch all the Christmas movies and make sausage balls, and Alan tries to fit in some football when there's time.

We love college football. During the fall and winter, you can find us at home on Saturdays wearing orange & white and blue & gold, making comfort food and hosting anyone who wants to come over to watch the West Virginia Mountaineers and the Tennessee Volunteers.

And finally, one tradition that has emerged is that we see the Avett Brothers band almost every year. We never really set out to be super fans, but after seeing them on a whim, we became hooked. Even when they're not in the PNW, we typically find ourselves going to Las Vegas or somewhere nearby to catch them when we can.



travel

From day one we've been on the move. Getting married in Costa Rica then taking off on a road-trip across the US, traveling has become a part of our DNA, and we've created a life that makes time for exploring and visiting other cultures. We've lived and worked in Dusseldorf, seen our favorite band in Amsterdam, and visited Christmas Markets with friends from Berlin. Staying in other peoples homes and experiencing different cultures and traditions around the world is what keeps us inspired and humble. We shoot for one or two big adventures a year, but even when were unable, we love road trips, and hiking and camping across the country.

We take Bob everywhere we go. BTW, Bob's a towel.

family & friends

With our families being from the East Coast and Southeast, we've been fortunate to build a local support system of friends over the past 15 years that we love and consider family. They include neighbors, mentors, and friends of all ages and backgrounds. We feel like we have family from coast to coast. And, even though some of our friends and family live far away, we make it a point to visit often with our childhood besties, aunts & uncles, cousins, and nieces & nephews. Everyone in our life is as excited as we are about our dream to provide a home for a child, and a warm relationship with his or her birth family.

we hope and dream that our child

Experiences a house full of laughter, pets, baking, arts and crafts, and movie watching nights.
Becomes who they want to be and expresses their uniqueness.
Explores the world and their creativity.
Feels loved and supported in failure and success.
Knows that there is always a break in traffic.
Learns that nothing is permanent and things will pass, good and bad.
Has a deep connection with their unique story and identity, and has a diverse extended community of mentors with similar race/ethnicity.
Can laugh and be open about their story, life, and big extended family.
Through unconditional love, positive relationships, and self-empowerment has the confidence to move forward and not be afraid of failure.

our hopes for open adoption

We hope our child has a deep, positive connection with where they came from and who they are.
We want our child to know that their birth parents made their decision out of love for them.
We want our child to know that the birth parents chose us.
We want the birth parents to feel that they made the right decision because of a warm and caring relationship with their child and the adoptive family.
We hope for a relationship with grace and understanding, knowing that we are all just people doing the best we can.
We hope to foster honest and caring communication, and tackle challenges head-on.
We hope to build a comfortable extended family, where the birth parents feel that they belong and are appreciated for who they are.
We hope that we can all talk about our adoption experience positively.
We hope that we can all eat and laugh together.

thank you.
we wish you luck
in your journey.